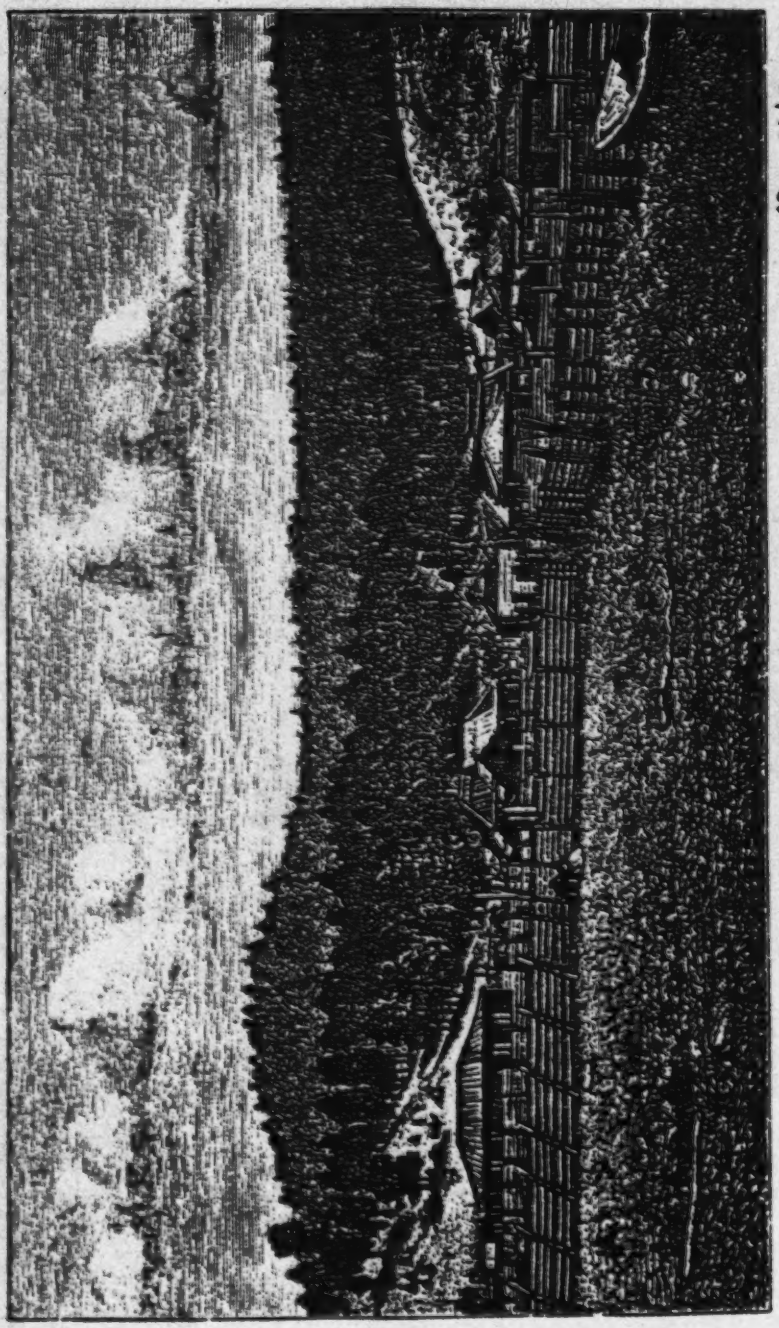
51: Müller--152 N-2 (1873-1875) 1882 RV2 Yakut RV2



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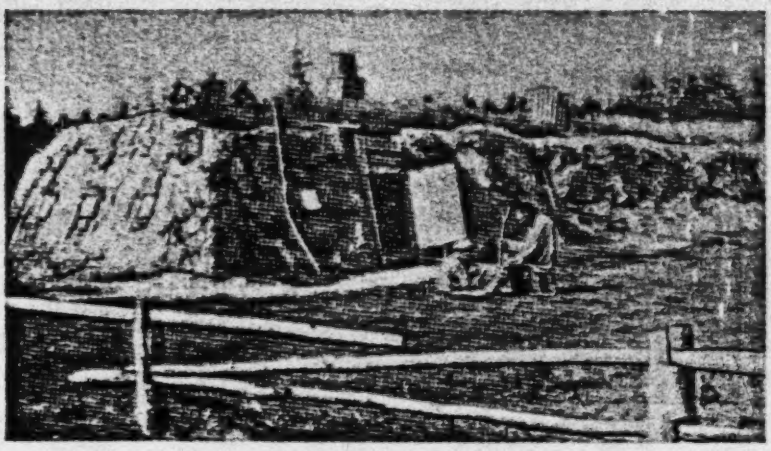
Shérbinsk /Zherbinsk/ Station on the Lena.

53:Tokarev and Gurvich E-4 (no date) 1964
RV2 Yakut RV2



342

Dwelling of poor Yakut.

1926 census) in 70% of the populated points of Yakutiya. This was predominantly at the winter camps (kystyk). The summer camps (sayylyk) were usually larger—from 5 to 10 or more dwellings together. The scattered nature of the settlement was primarily due to the terrain and the type of economy and also to the desire to exploit separate alasy and river valleys scattered about the taiga. 361

The predominant type of Yakut dwelling (d'ie) was the yurt or balagan. 342 It was a structure with a square base made of erect poles slanting slightly inwards, with a very gently sloping double roof, the overall effect of which was a truncated quadrilateral pyramid. The framework of the yurt consisted of four thick vertical columns at the corners, inserted in the ground, and a horizontal frame of four beams resting on top of them. In most of the yurts, apart from the four corner columns, there were two, four or eight additional ones (in the middle of the walls) supporting the beams. The four sides of the yurt usually faced the four points of the compass, with the entrance facing east. Parallel to the entrance, in the middle of the frame, running from south to north, there was a thick main beam, or two thinner ones alongside. The ends of the thinner beams rested on the main beam, while the other ends rested on the eastern and western beams of the framework and formed a solid, gently sloping double roof. The walls were made of thinner, upright beams or poles, the lower ends of which were inserted into the ground, while the others rested on the top frame close together. Small rectangular windows were made in the southern and western walls, in which were inserted panes; in the old days these panes were covered in the summer with mica or sometimes white cloth, bladder, or bits of glass (the latter were inserted in the birchbark frame); in the winter, pieces of ice were put in the windows. In the eastern wall they made an entrance with a one-piece, slightly inclined plank door covered with cowhide or some other such material. Bark was placed on top of the roof beams and then covered with earth; on the outside the walls were coated with clay mixed with cow dung, the coating being repeated quite often, sometimes every autumn. Around the walls on the outside 351 was a low earth embankment sometimes fortified with a wooden fence (central Yakutiya). The floor was usually made of earth, but the richer

53:Tokarev and Gurvich E-4 (no date) 1964
RV2 Yakut RV2

342

Summer birchbark dwelling and six-cornered house.

There was another type of construction found among the Yakuts (either as a dwelling or as a cattle stall); it was a six- or eight-cornered log yurt with a pyramidal roof, identical to the well-known Buryat and Khakas structures. These yurts were observed, for example, in the regions near the mouth of the Vilyuy, in the Meginskiy and Borogonskiy ulusy, as well as in the Kolymskiy Okrug. They have been known since the 18th century.

342 178 [171]

During the 19th century the Russian type of structure—the log hut—gradually came into use among the Yakuts, particularly the better off people. At the beginning of the 20th century there were many such houses, particularly in areas near towns. A mixed type was often found: for example, a log hut built onto a yurt, a log hut with a Yakut hearth, and so on.

342 177

The living quarters and farm buildings of the family and the space surrounding them constituted the farmstead, which was fenced off with a solid fence of horizontal poles without any gates (in order to get inside the poles at one spot were removed from their supports, or else people simply stepped over them). Inside the enclosure were posts for tying up horses, and these were skillfully carved. In the summer camps the farms were often close together.

357

When speaking of structures, we should also mention the fact that in the old days the Yakuts knew how to make fortifications or ostrozhki, as they were called in the Russian texts of the 17th century. For example, in 1636–1637, during the campaign against the Kangalastsy, the Russian Cossacks found that "they had built strong forts with two walls covered with gravel, and surrounded by snow and water;" it was only after a two-day assault that the Cossacks managed to take one of these forts. In 1642 the Russians also took a Yakut fortress after great difficulty: ". . . the fort was made with two walls, the space between the walls was filled with earth, and there were log towers." At a later stage these fortifications disappeared, and no one has described them since in detail. But even in the 19th century it was possible to find special tower-like barns here and there, which belonged to the Toyons.

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Clothing

The national Yakut costume had only been partly preserved by the beginning of the 20th century, having been replaced by Russian clothing or at least strongly influenced by the latter. The national cut and purely Yakut materials were preserved to a greater extent in the winter clothing.

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